

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 AID-05 SCA-01

HEW-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /093 W

-----031258 127766 /45

R 021610Z MAR 77

FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5781

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOCI, SPOP, SHUM, PINS, PINT, SF

SUBJECT: SAG HANDLING OF SQUATTER PROBLEM STIRS HEATED CONTROVERSY

REF: CAPE TOWN 0194, CAPE TOWN A-12,

1. SAG INTENTION TO EVICT SQUATTERS FROM MODDERDAM CAMP OUTSIDE CAPE TOWN (CAPE TOWN 194) HAS CREATED MAJOR PUBLIC CONTROVERSY. NUMBER OF SQUATTERS AFFECTED ESTIMATED VARIOUSLY BETWEEN 5,000-7,000, OF WHICH 80 PERCENT ARE BLACKS, 15 PERCENT COLOREDS, 4 PERCENT "MIXED" AND A FEW INDIANS.

2. POSSIBLY AS CONSEQUENCE OF SEVERE PUBLIC CRITICISM IN PRESS, AT PUBLIC PROTECT MEETINGS AND ON FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT, SAG ANNOUNCED ON FEB 15 AN EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE TO FEB. 25. PUBLIC INDIGNATION WAS THEN FURTHER FUELLED WHEN DIVISIONAL COUNCIL OFFICIALS DEMOLISHED SHANTIES IN TWO OTHER SMALLER "CAMPS," LEAVING SOME 300 PEOPLE, INCLUDING WOMEN AND BABIES, CAMPED OUT IN OPEN DURING A WEEKEND OF RAIN AND COLD WEATHER.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MINISTER STEYN WAS FORCED TO APOLOGIZE ON FLOOR OF SENATE WHEN IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT HIS CATEGORIC DENIAL THAT EARTHMOVING EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN USED TO DEMOLISH SHANTIES WAS IN ERROR. GOVERNMENT EMBARRASSMENT WAS COMPOUNDED WHEN CAPE SUPREME COURT ISSUED STINGING REBUKE FOR "FLAGRANT CONTEMPT" OF LAW BY COUNCIL OFFICIALS WHO FAILED TO PROVIDE LEGALLY-REQUIRED 7-DAY NOTICE.

3. IN MEANTIME, ATTORNEYS FOR SQUATTERS IN MAIN CAMP AT MODDERDAM CONTINUED NEGOTIATIONS WITH SAG OFFICIALS. AT EXPIRATION OF FEB 25 DEADLINE, SAG SENT SECOND NOTICE TO VACTATE WITH A MARCH 7 DEADLINE. SAG HAS SAID IT WILL SET UP TEMPORARY SITE AT NYANGA TOWNSHIP WHERE EVICTED BLACKS WHO ARE LEGALLY PRESENT IN CAPE AREA MAY ERECT SHACKS.

4. MAIN PROBLEM CENTERS ON FACT THAT WHILE AN ESTIMATED 80 PERCENT OF BLACK MALES IN THE CAMPS ARE EMPLOYED AND QUALIFY LEGALLY TO BE IN CAPE AREA, ONLY ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF THE WOMEN ARE "LEGAL." DEPUTY MINISTER OF BANTU AFFAIRS RECENTLY TOLD CONGEN OFF THAT MOST OF WOMEN (AND CHILDREN) HAVE COME INTO CAPE ILLEGALLY FROM CISKEI OR TRANSKEI AND WILL BE EXPECTED TO RETURN "TO THEIR PLACE OF ORIGIN." WHETHER ACCOMMODATION WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR THEM, THERE IS, HE SAID, "MATTER FOR HOMELANDS OFFICIALS TO DETERMINE." THUS, FOR BLACKS, MAIN EFFECT OF SQUATTERS' EVICTION IS LIKELY TO BE BREAKING UP OF LARGE NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND LACK OF ACCOMMODATION FOR MANY WIVES AND CHILDREN FORCED TO RETURN TO "HOMELANDS." AS FOR COLOREDS, SAG OFFICIALS HAVE TALKED VAGUELY OF THEIR FINDING ACCOMMODATION IN EXISTING COLORED TOWNSHIPS, BUT THESE ARE ALREADY BADLY OVERCROWDED.

5. WHETHER LEGAL ACTION AND CONTINUING PUBLIC PROTEST WILL RESULT IN FURTHER DELAYS IS NOT CLEAR. SAG APPEARS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DETERMINED TO CLEAR AREA WHICH ABUTS ON PREMISES OF (COLORED) UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN CAPE (UWC) AND COLORED PERSONS REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL, TWO SHOWPIECES OF SAG'S APARTHEID POLICY. SQUATTER LEADERS INSIST THAT ACCOMMODATION BE FOUND FOR ALL MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY BEFORE ANY AGREE TO MOVE. STUDENTS AT UWC HAVE REPORTEDLY BEGUN SCHOOL YEAR IN RESTIVE MOOD AND MIGHT WELL BE INCLINED TO JOIN SQUATTERS IN CLASHES WITH POLICE WHICH MAY OCCUR IF SAG ATTEMPTS EVICTION BY FORCE. BOWDLER

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